

Vaccines for Africa: Roll-out and Production in South Africa (SAVax)

The COVID-19 Pandemic in South Africa

The COVID-19 pandemic severely impacted the health system in South Africa. A key area affected was the continuous rollout of vaccinations for preventable diseases. This has resulted in outbreaks such as measles and has negatively impacted the vaccination rate. At the same time there is a recognition that adult vaccinations need to be more accessible. The National Department of Health (NDoH) is undertaking a policy shift to a Life Course Vaccination Approach e(LCVA): in future times of pandemic the vaccination service delivery platform in South Africa will be able to respond rapidly offering vaccines to everyone when they need it. The COVID-19 pandemic also revealed Africa's severe dependency on imports of foreign vaccines, highlighting the need for local production to ensure equitable access to safe and effective vaccines. Currently, only 1% of vaccines are produced on the African continent. African leaders, with South African President Cyril Ramaphosa in the lead, have committed to the goal that by 2040, 60% of vaccines administered in Africa are also produced on the continent.



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Since June 2024 SAVax implements its project activities under a joint action from the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the European Union (EU). This contributes directly to the Team Europe Initiative (TEI) on manufacturing and access to vaccines, medicines and health products in Africa (MAV+). With the landscape having shifted to post pandemic, GIZ is focused on (a) supporting the implementation of a vaccination program for adults whilst strengthening pandemic preparedness, and (b) increasing the local production of vaccines and health products.

Vaccine Roll-Out & Pandemic Preparedness

GIZ and the National Department of Health cooperate on the integration of vaccinations for the South African population into routine health care services. Thereby they work towards the goal of making vaccinations available in every health facility in South Africa. Ensuring immunization through the life course does not only prevent deaths from vaccine-preventable disease but also creates the mechanisms to react to future pandemics. So far, SAVax has closely cooperated with DG Murray Trust, University of Pretoria (UP) and Ndlovu Medical Trust vaccinating more than 44,000 people in disadvantaged communities or informal settlements. In 2023, almost 500,000 people were reached through direct communication measures and received the message that vaccines save lives. Through a number of scientific partnerships including CAPRISA (Centre for the AIDS Programme of Research in South Africa), the University of Pretoria, Charité University of Medicine Berlin and the Centre for Epidemic Response and Innovation (CERI) at the University of Stellenbosch, GIZ SAVax contributes to building capacity on genomic sequencing, immune monitoring and vaccination responses to inform the development of evidence-based policy. SAVax is committed to train the next generation of vaccines experts and to ensure that South Africa



Left: Vaccination in Community Hall
Right: Sequencing of Covid-19 Samples



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improves its pandemic response and is better prepared for future health emergencies.

Training the next generation of vaccine experts

GIZ has supported the local manufacturing of vaccines in South Africa since 2008 by deploying integrated experts at the BioVac Institute in Cape Town, which today is one of the leading manufacturers on the African continent. GIZ supports Biovac to achieve a WHO pre-qualification for vaccines relevant for the African continent. A German immunologist is deployed at the start-up Afrigen and contributes to its transformative research projects as an integrated expert. Afrigen makes part of the WHO mRNA vaccine technology transfer hub. Furthermore, six consortia of start-ups and research centers in the biomanufacturing sector have been selected for seed funding and technical assistance for their innovative products. Today, GIZ and the Department for Science and Innovation cooperate on the development of skills for vaccine development and manufacturing. SAVax qualifies 240 matriculants with practical skills for the pharmaceutical and agroprocessing industry at UVU Bio. Furthermore, with South Africa's leading research organisation Center for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) SAVax is training over 100 professionals from the pharma industry and researchers on the highest biomanufacturing standards and Good Manufacturing Practice.

Vaccine Regulation

The backbone of local vaccine production is an effective national regulatory authority to ensure the quality and safety of vaccines. SAVax supports the development plans of the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (SAHPRA) to reach WHO maturity level 4. This will accelerate the approval of new vaccines in the country. By 2027, 60 employees from SAHPRA will be trained; 50% of whom will be women. The focus areas for training include (1) Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP), (2) Inspections of biological medicines and vaccines manufacturers, (3) Clinical Trials Evaluation, (4) Biological and Biosimilar medicines and Vaccine

dossier evaluation process, (5) Clinical and Bioequivalence Evaluation and (6) Vaccines lot release. SAVax supports SAHPRA in fulfilling its role as a regional excellence center for vaccine release and builds the capacity of other national regulators in that area. Regulatory harmonisation across African countries will facilitate exports of vaccines made in South Africa and strengthen pandemic response on the continent. GIZ partners with SAHPRA to facilitate exchanges with other African regulators.

Vaccine Market Shaping

Ensuring the development of new vaccines in South Africa goes hand in hand with the creation of the demand for them at continental and global level, for instance through long-term procurement contracts with other African governments or regional and international organisations like the Southern African Development Community (SADC) or GAVI. That requires major policy changes and strong coordination with complex processes. SAVax supports the capacity of South African stakeholders from the public and private sphere for market analysis and market shaping activities related to vaccines produced in South Africa. By creating evidence, different ministries in South Africa can make informed decisions and strengthen coordination across government on local production of vaccines and pandemic preparedness.

When it comes to vaccinations, together we are stronger

Vaccine roll-out and production involve a variety of actors from the public and private sector, academia and civil society working together on a joint challenge. GIZ has vast experience in managing multiple stakeholder systems by applying different structures, processes and tools adjusted to the common goals and objectives. Hence, SAVax is implementing its activities according to the spirit of the Sustainable Development Goal on Global Partnerships for coordination and harmonization amongst all actors.

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